

**Health Alert:  
High Risk  
U.S. Terrorism  
Threat Level  
Increased to  
Orange**

**December 22, 2003**

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at <http://www.dhss.state.mo.us/>.

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

**Health Alerts** convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from Missouri health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

**Health Advisories** provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

**Health Guidances** contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by DHSS.

**Health Updates** provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

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**Health Alert  
December 22, 2003**

**FROM: RICHARD C. DUNN  
DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: U.S. Terrorism Threat Level Increased to Orange**

On Sunday, December 21, the nation's threat level was raised from elevated risk ("yellow") to high risk ("orange"), the second highest level of the Homeland Security Advisory System. The change was prompted by a belief on the part of the Department of Homeland Security that terrorists may attempt to attack the U.S.

The Department of Homeland Security is taking measures across the country to raise preparedness to their highest levels. This includes increased security at U.S. borders and in the transportation, oil and food industries, as well as the mobilization of response and recovery teams across the nation.

At this time, public health officials are urged to be fully prepared to respond to terrorist attacks. Specific Public Health activities prudent at this time include:

- Ensure that surveillance and reporting measures are active and alerted to report any unusual disease or disease patterns, or chemical or radiation events;
- Review specific emergency response plans;
- Evaluate facilities and personnel to ensure the safety and security of both;
- Educate employees on emergency procedures;
- Ensure sufficient staffing to respond to potential widespread or multiple events threatening the nation's public health; and
- Ready communications systems to meet the needs of all audiences, including emergency responders, clinicians and the general public.

Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are providing information to assist the public health community in increasing their level of preparedness for different threat agents. Information on threat agents is available at the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov>. General information about the health effects of terrorism threat agents is available at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov> and <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>.

CDC will provide additional information as it is available. For questions, technical assistance, or to report an event, please contact the Department Situation Room at 1-800-392-0272.